DISABLED PERSONS BULLETIN

No. 2/1992 (autumn issue)

SPECIAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY ISSUE

MESSAGE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL: WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION OPENS WAY TO FULL PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY*

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali calls for renewed support for the World Programme of Action.

1992 marks the last year of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. It is appropriate at this point to assess the progress that has been made during the past 10 years and to determine what challenges continue to face disabled people worldwide.

When the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1981 the International Year for Disabled Persons, few realized that this would herald a whole new era for those with disabilities. So successful was the Year that it has come to be regarded as a milestone in the long struggle of disabled people for equal rights. During 1981, the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons was drawn up, based on the principles of human rights, self-determination and equalization of opportunities. The World Programme sets forth a new and challenging approach that can open the way to a future in which disabled people may participate fully in society.

During the past 10 years much has been accomplished. For the first time in history, the issue of disability and myriad concerns of disabled persons are appearing on the political agenda at both national and international levels. Knowledge about disability has increased greatly, thanks to the efforts of organizations of disabled persons in bringing the issue of disability to the forefront of social consciousness. Also, the United Nations has been instrumental in translating a substantial part of the World Programme into concrete guidelines and manuals.

The last year of the Decade of Disabled Persons, 1992, will be used as a transition point for putting into place the lessons learned over the Decade, for transforming awareness into action, and for changing words to deeds. To accomplish this, political will is required on the part of States to accord disability issues the high priority they deserve.

With this aim the General Assembly has decided to devote four special meetings in October to the conclusion of the Decade. At these meetings we hope to consolidate the achievements of the Decade and forge a commitment for the future.

As we begin a new era, the challenge lies ahead — to accord disability issues the highest possible priority in development planning and to devote the financial and political commitment necessary to ensure greater progress in the years ahead.

I wish to invite Governments, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, community groups and individuals everywhere to renew their support for the World Programme of Action, which will in turn improve the quality of life for people with disabilities around the world. ■

*The message of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was delivered on his behalf by Joseph Verner Reed, Under-Secretary-General for Public Affairs, at the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on a Long-term Strategy to Further the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the Year 2000 and Beyond, held at Vancouver from 25 to 29 April 1992.

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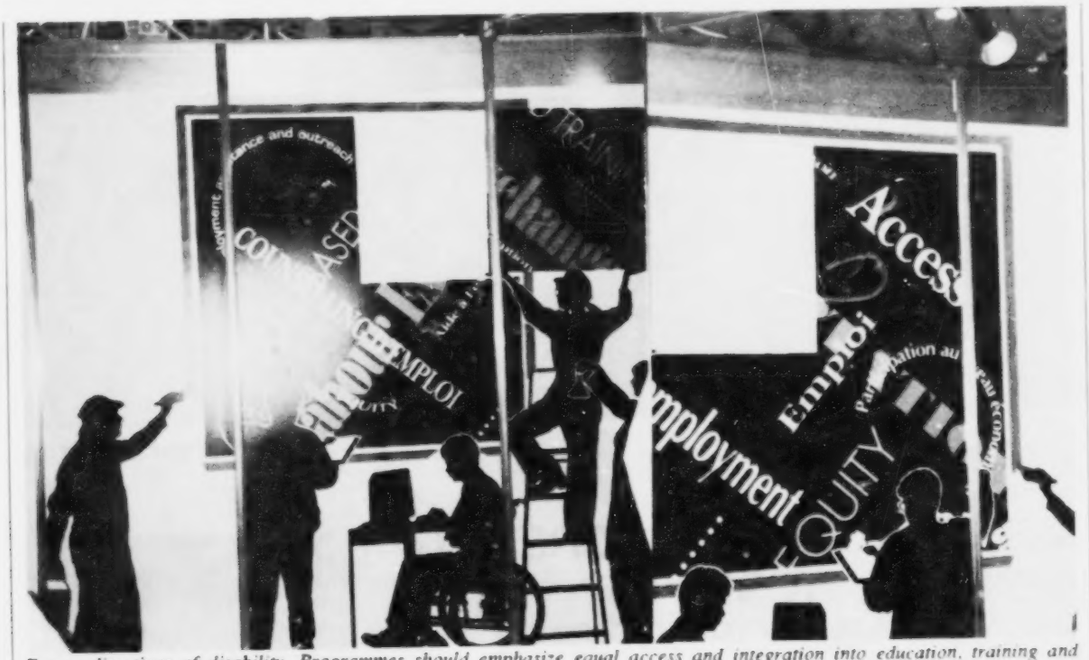

Future directions of disability. Programmes should emphasize equal access and integration into education, training and employment services.

SPECIAL PLENARY MEETINGS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO MAP OUT COMMITMENTS BEYOND 1992

Assessing achievements, shortcomings and the future of the United Nations disability programme will be a major task for the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. No less than four special plenary meetings of the Assembly will be held at United Nations Headquarters from 12 to 13 October 1992 to mark the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

Reaffirming the commitment of the United Nations to disability issues, the agenda of the meetings will begin with opening speeches by the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the chairpersons of the five regional groups. These will be followed by briefings to Member States by international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. The seven non-governmental organizations invited to give briefings are the World Blind Union, the World Federation of the Deaf, the League of Societies of Mentally Handicapped Persons, the World Veterans Federation, Rehabilitation International, Disabled Peoples International, and the International Council on Disability.

With the Secretary-General's Report of the Second Round of Monitoring of the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (1987-1992) providing a framework for the deliberations, the intention is to give Member States the opportunity to compare notes and consider the future direction of disability policies and the United Nations disability programme, as well as to renew their commitment to disability issues and the principles of the World Programme of Action beyond the Decade. It is envisaged that a draft resolution outlining specific issues requiring urgent action will also be prepared in the plenary meetings for further discussion and adoption by the Third Committee.

Several events surrounding the special plenary meetings have also been planned. Prior to the meetings, the International Conference of Ministers Responsible for Disability will be held at Montreal from 8 to 10 October 1992 in order to seek consensus on a framework for action to further the momentum generated at the international level by the Decade. Non-governmental organizations will hold a forum in New York on 9 October 1992, while the Third Committee is tentatively scheduled to meet from 19 to 26 October 1992.

Highlighting disability issues at special sessions of the General Assembly should be seen as a starting-point for further progress. ■

ACHIEVEMENTS, SHORTCOMINGS AND CHALLENGES OF THE DECADE

Bearing in mind that persons with disabilities are the primary focus of any disability programme, an advisory committee consisting of representatives of 23 States Members of the United Nations drew up the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. In 1982 the World Programme of Action was adopted by the General Assembly. At the same time, the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons was proclaimed to assist policy makers, planners, legislators etc., in the adoption of disability policies and to provide a time-frame for the initial implementation of the World Programme of Action.

A new approach to disability

The first evaluation was made by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV/CSDHA) at the mid-point of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, and endorsed by a global meeting of experts consisting largely of disabled persons, held at Stockholm in 1987. The meeting of experts acknowledged that the World Programme of Action had offered a new approach to and increased understanding of disability by redefining the issues in a human rights context and by recommending practical measures aimed at self-determination and equalization. With its framework of prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities, the Programme opened the way to a future in which disabled people may participate fully in society as citizens with equal rights and obligations.

Upward trend in the occurrence of disabilities

Despite the progress that has been made in the areas of health and rehabilitation, the number of disabled persons has increased over the course of the Decade, especially in war-stricken areas and those affected by famine. Between 6 and 10 per cent of

There are about 110,000 disabled persons among the nearly 2 million Palestine refugees.

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the world population (that is, around 500 million people) have been identified as having one or more disabilities. Approximately 160 million are women and another 140 million children.

It is estimated that 300 million people with disabilities live in developing countries, and that only 1 per cent of these have access to basic health, education and adequate sanitation services. With currently escalating population growth rates, poverty, accidents and armed conflicts, these figures will increase in the years to come.

In 1987, the Stockholm meeting of experts noted that, despite achievements in the area of prevention, progress had been slow, particularly in developing countries. However, at the international, regional and national levels, new policies and programmes have emerged throughout the Decade, aiming at alleviating this situation. The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies adopted a variety of declarations and resolutions calling for comprehensive measures addressing disability issues. In 1992, the last year of the Decade, it is appropriate to examine what has been achieved, the shortcomings identified, and the challenges that lie ahead. Thus, on the basis of the findings of a second round of monitoring of the implementation of the World Programme of Action, covering the period 1987-1992, a report of the Secretary-General was prepared for consideration by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

Increased awareness and understanding

Prejudice and discrimination result from social, economic and cultural factors. There are indications that the International Year of Disabled Persons and the World Programme of Action provided an invaluable guide for those seeking to overcome prejudices and improve the status of disabled persons. **Undoubtedly, the major achievement of the Decade was increased public awareness of disability issues among policy makers, planners, politicians, service providers, parents and disabled persons themselves.**

Public awareness campaigns at the national level were undertaken in many countries and included intensive media and public education programmes, as well as national events and commemorative days and weeks focusing on people with disabilities. These activities have actually helped to achieve positive changes in attitudes among the general public. In this connection, it should be noted that the notion has developed that there is a close relationship between disabled persons and the environment, which actually creates the handicap, and that society has the responsibility to remove obstacles to full participation.

Public awareness of disability issues has increased during the Decade.

Coordination for growth and stability

During the last 10 years, many Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and organizations of disabled persons embarked on the formulation of disability policies and sought to better coordinate their programmes. Unfortunately, many national coordinating committees established during the International Year of Disabled Persons were disbanded at the end of the Year. But lately national coordinating mechanisms have been increasingly seen as essential for securing policy development and stability in implementation. However, the organizational structure of these mechanisms and the range of responsibilities assumed by them differ and are gener-

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR DISABILITY

As an industrialized country which has included in its constitution a clause prohibiting discrimination on the basis of any mental or physical disability, and which accords people with disabilities equal protection and benefits of the law, Canada is hosting an International Conference of Ministers Responsible for Disability at Montreal from 8 to 10 October 1992, presided over by Robert de Cotret, Secretary of State of Canada and Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

The Conference is viewed as preparatory to the special plenary meetings of the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session to mark the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. Its aim is to seek a consensus on a framework for action at the international level to further the momentum generated by the Decade of Disabled Persons. The Conference will also provide an opportunity to discuss improving the exchange of information and collaboration, as well as issues relating to technology and financing.

Representatives of disabled persons' organizations from the Latin America region discussing future programmes.

ally weak. Accordingly, in 1990, the United Nations set the preparation and dissemination of guidelines for the establishment and development of national coordinating committees on disability or similar bodies as a priority for effective national coordination. By assisting countries in defining and strengthening the role of national coordinating mechanisms the United Nations hopes to further build on the momentum gained during the Decade and to inspire effective measures for the full participation of disabled persons in society.

Organizations for larger gains

The growth and development of organizations of disabled persons is an area where great strides have been made during the Decade. Disabled people, through their organizations, have been able to increase their influence, gain the respect of their community, achieve greater independence, and gain access to the resources of the community. Despite these gains, the resource base of these organizations has remained weak.

While there has been an increase in the participation of disabled persons in different sectors of society, disabled people are not yet an integral part of the decision-making process at national and international levels. With a guiding philosophy based on a shift away from a charity approach towards empowerment, efforts to promote the growth and impact of organizations of disabled persons should be stepped up worldwide.

Active partners in the labour market: the bridge to independence.

Sharing information and data

Since the International Year of Disabled Persons and the beginning of the Decade, basic knowledge about disability has grown considerably and the flow of information on disability issues has increased, particularly in industrialized countries. Through the mass media, the general public has participated in discussions, debates and information programmes, while databases on disability issues are being set up in several countries. At the national level, disability issues are being included in censuses and household surveys, and statistical information on disability, which in 1960 was available in only 15 countries, is now available in over 55. Several European countries have set up an extensive computerized information network as part of the efforts of the European Community to share disability-related information.

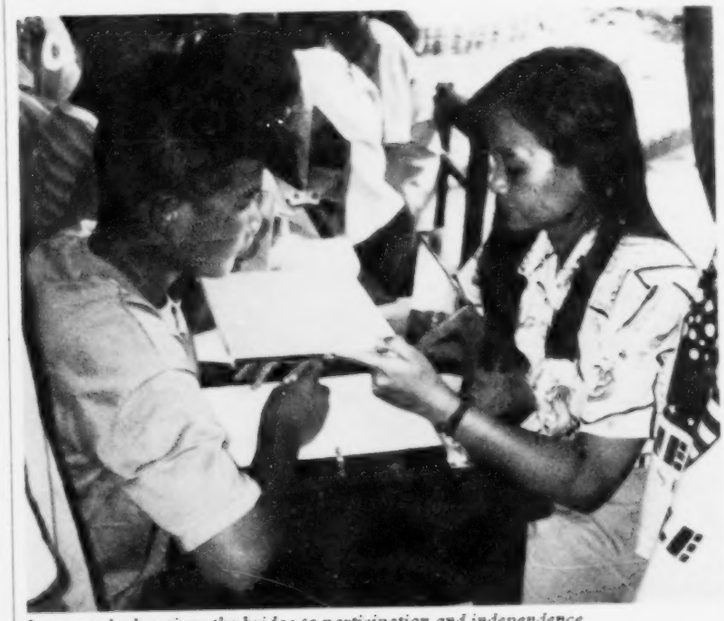
However, in many countries specific and up-to-date data are often inadequate. Differences in definitions within and among countries, the technical shortcomings of censuses and surveys, as well as particular social attitudes make it difficult to establish reliable data and carry out research, and weaken the basis for policy formulation and service planning. To redress this situation, countries would need to establish and publish national databases which will provide more reliable information for policy makers and planners. In this connection, attention is drawn to efforts undertaken by the United Nations to assist developing countries in compiling and using national disability statistics, and to exchange information and data relevant to disability issues with other countries and organizations, particularly those in the developing world. It is essential that this information should be presented in accessible formats to facilitate the exchange of information among those with impairments.

Human resource development: education, training and employment

Realizing the importance of achieving the autonomy and independence of disabled persons, not only for the benefit of disabled persons themselves but also for society as a whole, many countries have reported special measures and arrangements for education and training. Unfortunately, cultural and environmental barriers often form the main obstacles to the further development of people with disabilities. Nevertheless, human resource development through special programmes for education, training and employment has helped disabled persons overcome these barriers in many countries, while mainstreaming and integration in both education and employment remained the main focus.

Education at primary and secondary levels has been made available to disabled persons in several countries, either through special schools or within mainstream educational or vocational training programmes. However, education at higher levels is often not provided. There is, moreover, a great disparity between educational facilities available in developed and developing countries.

Content and quality of education and training should ensure that the skills acquired provide opportunities for work and independent living. In many countries, however, this is not the case. In regard to employment, many countries have realized the need to promote policies for affirmative action based on the right of disabled persons to employment and training on equal terms in the regular labour force. In addition to formal employment, self-employment and income-generating schemes have been created in developing countries. Yet environmental barriers in many workplaces make them inaccessible to disabled persons, while employers often fail to appreciate their potential. The International Labour Organisation reports that unemployment among disabled persons is two to three times higher than for other persons, and still higher in developing countries. Because of a lack of education and training, disabled persons are often employed in low-level positions. Discrimination in a decreasing job market often forces them to accept positions much lower than their qualifications or abilities reflect. Disabled women, disabled migrant workers and disabled refugees are especially disadvantaged in the job market, as they are a silent minority without effective pressure groups. In the years ahead these issues will require the urgent attention of Governments, non-governmental organizations, and organizations of disabled persons.



Integrated education: the bridge to participation and independence.

Assistance by the international community

Several specialized agencies and other bodies in the United Nations system have prepared guidelines and manuals on key disability issues with innovative approaches. These guidelines, however, have neither been adequately incorporated in national programmes nor fully applied in the provision of services to disabled persons in the majority of countries. Many developing countries do not have a comprehensive plan or programme within the context of the World Programme of Action, while many disability programmes are still separated from overall development planning.

In order to make the recommendations of the World Programme of Action more operational, repeated calls were made during the Decade for a long-term strategy and a new international instrument setting out standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons.

Accordingly, the Economic and Social Council, by its resolution 1990/26, authorized the Commission for Social Development to consider the establishment of a working group to elaborate such a body of standard rules. The Working Group established as a result, composed of government experts and observers from the specialized agencies, other intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations, at its final session to be held from 28 September to 2 October 1992, will complete its work on the draft text of the Standard Rules, which will be submitted to the Commission for Social Development, the Council and the General Assembly in 1993. The new instrument will offer Governments clear policy options on how to implement measures for full equalization of opportunities for disabled persons.

A new decade of change

The year 1992 marks the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, a period which has laid the foundations for further progress towards full realization of its stated goals. The year should be used as a transition point, a time to take stock of the lessons of the Decade and to put into practice new approaches. Now is the time to build upon the awareness raised throughout the Decade and turn it into comprehensive disability programmes designed to further integrate disabled persons into society. Already in 1990 the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to shift the focus of the United Nations disability programme away from awareness-raising towards action, with the aim of creating a society for all by the year 2010. A society for all seeks the full and equal participation of all its members — regardless of their sex, age, race and disability. In order to reach this goal the Secretariat of the United Nations is currently preparing a long-term strategy to assist Member States in implementing the World Programme of Action beyond the Decade. An expert group meeting was convened by the United Nations at Vancouver from 25 to 29 April 1992 to work out such a strategy for the period up to the year 2000 and beyond, and to develop sustainable action plans.

Financial commitments required

Financial limitations have constituted a major obstacle to the implementation of the World Programme of Action. National reports indicate that adverse worldwide economic trends have led to deep reductions in disability-related government spending. However, in order to sustain development in the disability field at the national level, it is essential that Governments demonstrate the political will needed to expand the available resources. ■

TECHNICAL AIDS FOR ACCESS AND INTEGRATION

In many countries the importance of technical aids in assisting disabled persons to lead independent and integrated lives became clear during the Decade. Developing countries in particular received technical assistance from various organizations, such as the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics, the German Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit, the Swedish International Development Authority, the Swedish Red Cross, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Appropriate Health Resources and Technologies Action Group. These organizations provided financial and technical assistance for the establishment of workshops, the training of personnel, and the exchange of information between organizations.

In addition, some regional organizations, such as the African Rehabilitation Institute, were created to encourage cooperation between organizations and to facilitate the development of prosthetic and orthotic services in African countries. Institutions such as these could assist coun-

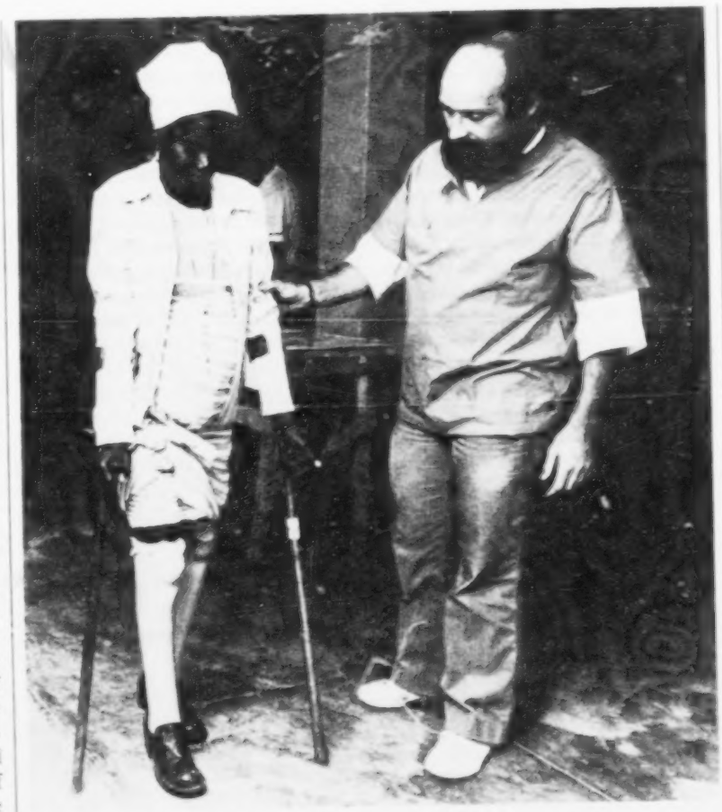
Technical aids are essential for communication by hearing-impaired persons.

tries in developing appropriate technologies from local resources.

Various national reports and regional orthopaedic workshops have indicated that developing countries have the capability of producing sufficient and appropriate technical aids at lower cost than imported devices, using locally available technology and materials. Certain types of very light wood (barza in Africa, balsa in South America and bamboo in Asia) combined with leather, hides or cotton have been successfully used in the manufacture of artificial limbs and braces. Iron and steel are available in great quantities in developing countries and can be used as a substitute for aluminium in the fabrication of joints. Functional, durable and inexpensive technical aids and equipment are now produced locally in many developing countries.

A number of countries, including Cyprus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Philippines and Tunisia, have established centres or workshops for the design, production and distribution of artificial limbs and other assistive devices. In India, rehabilitation engineers have designed a hand-propelled tricycle to facilitate the movement of people with restricted mobility, while a low-cost artificial limb, known as the "Jaipur foot", has been developed by the Rehabilitation Centre at Jaipur. Using readily available raw materials and simple tools, the Jaipur foot has attracted international attention as an excellent example of what can be done with local talent, skills and materials.

When exporting technical aids for disabled persons, suppliers should be responsive to the particular needs of the recipients and their countries. In the years to come, local production of assistive devices should be encouraged, taking into account local materials, technology and needs, while the transfer of rehabilitation technology to developing countries and the training of local personnel in maintenance will also be required. As consumers are better judges of the quality of the items they need and can provide ideas for improvements, efforts should also be made to promote the role played by disabled persons in the design and production of aids and appliances. ■



Technical aids are essential for mobility.

A DECADE LATER: UNOV/CSDHA TAKES STOCK

Despite its resource limitations throughout the Decade, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna has played a pivotal role, as the focal point within the United Nations system for disability matters, in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the World Programme of Action. During the Decade, the Centre has actively promoted the concepts of the World Programme of Action, raising awareness of disability issues, conducting action-oriented research, and assisting Member States in their efforts to improve the status of persons with disabilities. A variety of activities advocating the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons were developed. These activities, details of which have been regularly reported to United Nations bodies, are summarized below.

Inter-agency cooperation: the key to growth

During the Decade, the Centre has initiated and coordinated collective action through substantial cooperation between United Nations agencies and bodies. A special feature of the annual inter-agency meetings is the

participation of two umbrella international non-governmental organizations, namely Disabled Peoples' International and the International Council on Disability, as observers. The joint efforts of the United Nations and the international non-governmental organizations proved fruitful for progressive policies and the growth of disability-related programmes.

Policy development and standard-setting

The Centre has made substantive contributions in developing innovative policy guidelines and manuals on subjects such as equalization of opportunities, human resources development and national coordination. A number of seminars and international expert group meetings have been organized and research studies carried out. Such activities have been undertaken in close cooperation with United Nations agencies, organizations of disabled persons and relevant non-governmental organizations.

The Centre is currently preparing manuals on national disability legislation for developing countries and integrating needs and concerns of disabled persons in projects and national planning.

Awareness creation and information exchange

The Centre has undertaken and supported awareness creation and promotional activities in conjunction with the United Nations Department of Public Information, through the compilation of information kits and other information materials. In addition, the Centre supports national and regional initiatives creating greater awareness of disability such as exchange programmes, exhibitions and special events.

During the last 10 years, knowledge in the fields of prevention and rehabilitation has increased rapidly. In order to share such information, the Centre has initiated a global exchange programme to provide Member States, organizations and individuals with information on issues relating to disabled persons and to establish a disability information network. Such a network, to be known as the Clearing-house Database on Disability-related Information, is expected to become fully operational by 1994.

Defining the role of organizations of disabled persons

There is a need to strengthen the role of organizations of disabled persons in decision-making and planning. Support for such organizations was therefore considered an important factor in their formation and growth during the Decade. In this context, the Centre has established open channels of communication with organizations of disabled persons through annual consultative meetings with non-governmental organizations. Guidelines for the development of organizations of disabled persons have been compiled, and preparations are currently under way to develop a training manual for leaders and members of organizations of disabled persons, particularly in developing countries.

Technical assistance and cooperation

The Centre has provided advisory services to Member States, and field missions to developing countries have been organized. As part of its technical assistance programme activities, the Centre has cofinanced small-scale projects directly benefiting disabled persons through the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. By the end of 1991, the Fund had supported 161 such projects (see table, p. 10), including training activities for capacity-building and projects in support of the development of organizations of disabled persons, technical exchange of knowledge and experience, data collection and applied research.

Monitoring changes and progress

A number of countries have long-standing experience in tackling disability matters, while others are just beginning to work out national policies. The Centre has noted the disparities between countries in its assessments of the implementation of the World Programme of Action carried out in 1987 and in 1992.

Future perspectives

The 1990s could be remembered as an era when lessons were drawn from the experience of the 1980s and positive actions were taken. In order to assist Governments in dealing with a

UNOV/CSDHA is monitoring on a regular basis the implementation of the World Programme of Action and disseminating this information to its partners.

growing number of aged and disabled persons, the Centre will redirect its disability programme from awareness-raising to action.

By the end of 1993, the United Nations programme on disability will be guided by the following three important documents: the World Programme of Action, which provides a solid policy framework; the Long-term Strategy, which will set specific targets to be achieved within a definite time-frame; and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Disabled Persons, which will suggest global standards. These three documents will reflect the stages of progressive development and standard-setting in the field of disability. ■

A view from the working sessions held by the Ad Hoc Working Group on Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities.

Projects supported and grants disbursed by region, January 1980-December 1991

Regions	*Number of projects*	*Percentage*	*Value of grants (United States dollars)*	*Percentage*
Africa	45	27.9	1 075 281	36.7
Asia and the Pacific	36	22.4	476 922	16.3
Europe	1	—	1 440	—
Latin America and the Caribbean	15	9.3	129 300	4.4
Western Asia	16	9.9	294 413	10.0
Interregional and global	48	29.8	955 154	32.6
Total	161	100.0	2 932 510	100.0

Note: Totals may not add precisely because of rounding.

INDEPENDENCE '92: SUPPORTING THE PREPARATION OF A LONG-TERM STRATEGY

By bringing together representatives of Governments, industry and the international disabled community to effect social change, "Independence '92", the International Congress and Exposition on Disability, displayed a creative approach. This historic event was held at Vancouver from 22 to 26 April 1992. Timed to coincide with the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, this global gathering provided ample opportunities to reflect upon and evaluate the progress made during the Decade, to draw on the knowledge of internationally recognized leaders from the disabled community, policy makers, educators, employers and all those whose advocacy contributed to bringing disabled persons into the mainstream of society, and to plan the years ahead under the theme of "Self-determination by persons with disabilities".

The United Nations was represented by a delegation led by Joseph Verner Reed, Under-Secretary-General for Public Affairs, who delivered a message on behalf of the Secretary-General.

The event included a comprehensive cross-disabilities exhibition and demonstration of the latest products and services for people with disabilities. A broad range of such products, technical aids and services were showcased by 89 companies and organizations, while national pavilions were displayed by Australia, Canada, China and Germany.

As "Independence '92" was designed to help set an agenda for social change, strategies and equality well into the next century, an Expert Group Meeting on a Long-term Strategy to Further the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the Year 2000 and Beyond was organized by the Centre for Social Development

and Humanitarian Affairs in cooperation with the Government of Canada, and held from 25 to 29 April 1992. A second message on behalf of the Secretary-General was delivered by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Affairs at the opening ceremony of the Expert Group Meeting. In his message, the Under-Secretary-General stressed that the challenge ahead was to accord disability issues the highest possible priority in development planning and to ensure the commitment of the financial and political resources necessary to achieve greater progress in the years ahead. The meeting was attended by 11 experts from Africa, Asia, Europe and North America, the majority of whom were disabled, and by representatives of other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies.

During special hearings 28 representatives of various organizations of disabled persons discussed the achievements of the Decade and presented proposals which could be of use in the preparation of the long-term strategy. **They stressed, *inter alia*, the need for active participation by organizations of disabled persons in relevant decision-making processes; a fully accessible environment and equal access; and enhanced social development packages and economic opportunities for independent living by disabled persons.**

The Expert Group Meeting was to lay the basis for a long-term strategy to ensure continuation of the implementation of the World Programme of Action beyond 1992. The strategy, scheduled for official submission to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session in 1993, should stimulate action at the regional, national and local levels. ■

Rick Hansen, Chairperson of "Independence '92", and Joseph Verner Reed, Under-Secretary-General for Public Affairs of the United Nations, during the closing ceremony.

"Independence '92" provided people from different parts of the world with many opportunities to share experiences.

Proclamation of the Asia-Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002)

During the forty-eighth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) held at Beijing from 14 to 23 April 1992, a resolution was adopted proclaiming the period 1993-2002 the Asia-Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, with a view to giving fresh impetus to the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons beyond 1992 and to strengthening regional cooperation, focusing on full participation and equality of persons with disabilities.

The Executive Secretary of ESCAP was requested to assist member States in developing and pursuing national programmes of action, and in formulating and implementing technical guidelines and legislation promoting accessibility to buildings, public facilities, transport and com-

munication systems, information, education and training, and technical aids.

The main objectives of the Asia-Pacific Decade are as follows: to promote action in the countries of the region in legislation and in the establishment of national coordinating committees; and to strengthen regional cooperation aimed at improving the situation of people with disabilities. China will host the Disabled People's International/ESCAP Meeting to be held at Beijing in December 1992, which will be regarded as the official inaugural meeting of the Asia-Pacific Decade. Several other meetings, including mid-point and end-Decade meetings, are also scheduled.

At the forty-eighth session of ESCAP several Governments indicated their support for the new Decade. The Government of Australia earmarked $US 20,000 in support of the regional Decade, while China may be able to secure a further estimated contribution of $US 50,000. In addition, Disabled People's International and Rehabilitation International will serve as major resource organizations in conducting Decade-related activities. ■

1992 Presidential Award

In recognition of its efforts to create and implement the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs has been awarded the Quadrennial Presidential Award of Rehabilitation International. The Award includes an award symbol, as well as an honorarium endowed by the Hong Kong Rehabilitation Foundation. ■

Ms. E. Wong, the Secretary for Health and Welfare of Hong Kong, presented the Presidential Award during the 17th World Congress of Rehabilitation International.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The *Disabled Persons Bulletin* is published three times a year by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna, as an information exchange service to Governments, United Nations agencies, professionals, non-governmental organizations and disabled persons.

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The Editor welcomes news items from national disability committees, Governments and non-governmental organizations. Short articles and viewpoints on disability issues by disabled persons are also welcome. The Editor of the *Disabled Persons Bulletin* reserves the right to edit and publish manuscripts in line with the requirements of the publication.

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